



FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF THE OU VEBBE REBBE

RAV DANIEL MANN



Interrupting Shabbat Meal for Shema/ Sefira

Question: When we make early Shabbat, is it better, when nighttime falls, to recite *Kri'at Shema* and *sefirat ha'omer* during the meal or to wait until after the meal?

Answer: We will be assuming you were correct in starting the meal. To make that clear cut, you should have started the meal at least a half-hour before the optimal time for these recitations, which is *tzeit hako-chavim* (Mishna Berura 267:6 regarding *Kri'at Shema*; *ibid.* 489:23 regarding *sefirat ha'omer*). Grounds for leniency to start eating after this point are beyond our present scope (see discussion in *Piskei Teshuvot* 489:16).

The *mishna* (Shabbat 9b) says that we interrupt certain activities, including eating, in order to recite *Kri'at Shema*, but do not interrupt for *tefilla*, as only *Kri'at Shema* is a Torah-level obligation (Rashi *ad loc.*). The above refers to a case where he started when he should not have, but if he started early enough before the time for *Kri'at Shema*, he is not required to interrupt the meal (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 235:2, see *Mishna Berura ad loc.* 21).

According to the Rama (OC 489:4), *sefirat ha'omer* is like *Kri'at Shema* – if he started eating when he should not have, he should interrupt the eating for *sefirat ha'omer*, but if he started when he was allowed to, *sefirat ha'omer* can wait until after he finishes eating. *Sefirat ha'omer* is treated as strictly in this regard as *Kri'at Shema* because of the opinion that *sefirat ha'omer* is a Torah-level *mitzva* even when there are no *korbanot* (Rambam, Temidin 7:24, as opposed to Tosafot, Menachot 66a), and/or because it is a minor disruption of the meal (*Mishna*



Oded
Lewensohn,
Adv. & Notary

לבינסון רז ושות'
משרד עורכי דין ונוטריון



Lewensohn Raz & Co.
Law Offices & Notary

Estates, Probate,
and Inheritances*

Real Estate
Transactions

Tama 38 and Renovation
Construction Projects

* Durable Powers of Attorney for Health and Financial Matters



Moshe Raz,
Adv.

27 Keren Ha'Yesod St., Jerusalem | Tel: 02-6731000 | Email: office@lawlr.co.il | www.lawlr.co.il

Berura 489:25).

When it is not required to interrupt, is it positive to do so anyway? The Yerushalmi (Shabbat 1:2) says regarding one who is not required to interrupt eating for Mincha, that if he voluntarily interrupts, we call him a *hedyot* (simpleton), like others who do things from which they are exempt. Many explanations are given as to why it might be objectionable to “go the **extra** mile” – it may be haughtiness, it can reflect poorly on those who follow the *halacha* as given, it can distort the true *halacha* (see opinions in Encyclopedia Talmudit, entry “*Kol hapatur min hadavar v’oseihu*”). This rule appears at odds with the common halachic rule that one who is more *machmir* than he needs to be is lauded as worthy of blessing, and many attempts are made to distinguish between various cases. Regarding the case of Mincha, which the Yerushalmi addressed, while some say that one who is unnecessarily stringent is called a *hedyot* (Magen Avraham 232:9), others question whether this is accepted (Be’ur Halacha to 232:2; see Divrei Yissachar 18). Regarding voluntarily stopping the meal for the generally more stringent *Kri’at Shema* and *sefirat ha’omer*, none of the major commentators raises the prospect of calling him a *hedyot*.

There may be reasons to prefer a voluntary interruption of the meal specifically for *sefirat ha’omer*. We have seen already the idea that *sefirat ha’omer* is fulfilled with

relative ease, as it does not require much of a break. Additionally, there is special importance to the concern that if he forgets to recite *sefirat ha’omer* that day, it might disqualify the entire *mitzva* (see Noda B’yehuda I, OC 27). On the other hand, the Sha’agat Aryeh (22) says that on Shabbat, when one is in the midst of a mandatory full meal, the obligation of *Birkat Hama-zon* (50 + times a year) is more frequent (*tadir*) than *sefirat ha’omer* (49 times a year), which gives the former precedence regarding order. (It is unclear if this applies if one does not plan to *bentch* until much later). In this regard, *Kri’at Shema* is more common, and therefore has preference over both (*ibid.*).

In summation, there is nothing halachically compelling about either reciting *Kri’at Shema* and *sefirat ha’omer* as soon as possible or waiting until the end of the meal. Therefore, the most important determinant is what system works best so that you do not forget to do all the *mitzvot* sometime during the evening. ■

Having a dispute?



For a Din Torah in English or Hebrew contact ‘Eretz Hemdah - Gazit’ Rabbinical Court: 077-215-8-215 • fax: (02) 537-9626
beitdin@eretzhemdah.org